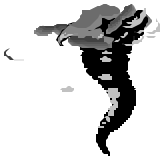

Severe Weather Awareness Week
March 10-16, 2002

Tornado Facts

?? Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air extending from severe thunderstorms to the ground.

?? Tornadoes usually are preceded by very heavy rain and possibly hail. If hail falls from a thunderstorm, it is an indication that the storm has large amounts of energy and may be severe. In general, the larger the hailstones, the more potential for damaging thunderstorm winds and/or tornadoes.

?? The most violent tornadoes are capable of tremendous destruction, with wind speeds of 250 m.p.h. or more.

?? An average tornado damage path is one to two miles long, but can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long.

?? Widths vary considerably during a single tornado, from less than ten yards to more than a mile, but typically are about 50 yards wide.

?? The average tornado moves from southwest to northeast, though tornadoes have been known to move in any direction.

?? The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 m.p.h. but may vary from nearly stationary to 70 m.p.h.

?? Tornadoes can occur throughout the year; however, the peak season in North Carolina is March through May.

?? Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., but have been known to occur at all hours of the day or night.

?? National Weather Service (NWS) Offices in Raleigh, Morehead City, and Wilmington, NC; Blacksburg and Wakefield, VA; Greenville-Spartanburg, SC; and Morristown, TN, provide warnings for North Carolina.

?? The NWS is now using Doppler weather radar to sense the air movement within thunderstorms. Early detection of increasing rotation aloft within a thunderstorm can allow time for lifesaving warnings before the tornado forms.

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